

COMMENTS AND RESPONSE

In view of the comments below, Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner reconsider the present application including rejected claims, as amended, and withdraw the claim rejections.

Priority

The Examiner has acknowledged Applicant's claim of foreign priority based on JPO 2003-4328, filed on January 10, 2003. However, the Examiner has indicated on the form PTOL-326 that none of the copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received.

Along with this application, Applicant filed a certified copy of this priority document. A copy of the date-stamped receipt, along with a copy of the front page of the priority document are submitted with this response.

Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner acknowledge receipt of the certified copy of the priority document.

Claim Rejections 35 USC § 102

The Examiner has rejected claims 1-7 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being allegedly anticipated by Lynn Woods, "Getting There Via Computer – computerized mapping software – Evaluation" ("Woods").

Applicant believes that the pending claims can be fully distinguished from Woods. However, in an effort to expedite prosecution and to clarify the claims, Applicant has amended independent claims 1 and 7.

Amended claim 1 recites "an area designating unit for designating a certain search area as the targeted search area, when the selected item is determined to include a certain area-

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designating information item that is related to the certain search area." Similarly, amended claim 7 recites "an area-designating information storing unit for storing a plurality of area-designating information items, wherein each of the area-designating information items is related to one of the search areas," and "designating a certain search area as a targeted search area chosen from the plurality of search areas, when the selected item is determined to include a certain area-designating information item that is related to the certain search area."

The language recited in these claims makes it clear that device and method of claims 1 and 7 divide the total available search area into multiple search areas, with particular search information items being associated with particular search areas. Furthermore, area-designating information items are also stored, with each of the area-designating items being associated with a particular search area. And the device and method of claims 1 and 7 can use this information to designate a search area when a selected item includes certain area-designating information items, regardless of the default search area. Nothing in Woods discloses or suggests this feature.

Woods reviews a number of conventional mapping programs, including Expedia Streets 98, StreetFinder, and TripMaker, as well as a number of online mapping sites such as MapQuest and Yahoo! However, none of these mapping programs disclose or suggest dividing the total available search area into multiple search areas, associating area-designating items with each of the plurality of search areas, and associating search information items with area-designating items, as recited in claims 1 and 7. Furthermore, none of them disclose designating a search area based on area-designating information items.

Consider if a search were performed in the United States using one of the products disclosed by Woods. Nothing in any of these products discloses storing data associated with individual searchable areas and then searching only those areas. Even though scale of a given

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map search might be changed, causing only a smaller map to be displayed on a screen, that does not disclose associating search information items or search-designating information with particular searchable areas chosen from a plurality of searchable areas, as recited in claims 1 and 7. Woods does not disclose that anything but a single set of data is used for searching.

Furthermore, even if search areas were used, Woods discloses nothing about setting what search areas to use based on area-designating items present in the user's search designating information.

Consider, if the United States were divided into several search areas, and a search were designated within one of these search areas. Using system and method of claims 1 and 7, after the search area selection was made, an on-map position would only be retrieved from within the designated search area.

By using multiple search areas, designating only a single search area, but allowing area-designating information to change the search area, the present claimed invention produces useful effects. In particular, a user may not need to intentionally set a targeted search area since some search information items (i.e., area-designating information) are associated with one of a plurality of search areas. This allows the present claimed invention to easily designate a targeted search area chosen from the plurality of possible search areas.

Furthermore, even when a selected item does not appear within a currently-designated target area, the proper target area can be designated by using the area-designating information includes in the selected item. In fact, this provides that the user need not even set a targeted search area in some cases. This can significantly reduce the time and complexity required to retrieve an on-map position.

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Claims 2-6 depend from claim 1 and are allowable for at least the reasons given above for claim 1.


Therefore, for at least the reasons given above, Applicant respectfully requests the Examiner withdraw the rejection of claims 1-7 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being allegedly anticipated by Woods.

Conclusion

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that the claims, as amended, clearly and patentably distinguish over the cited references of record and as such are deemed allowable. Such allowance is hereby earnestly and respectfully solicited at an early date. If the Examiner has any suggestions, comments, or questions, calls are welcome at the telephone number below.

Although it is not anticipated that any additional fees are due or payable, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any fees that may be required to Deposit Account No. 50-1147.

Respectfully Submitted,



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